

MINUTES FINAL - as of 1/22/07
Governor's State Trails Council Meeting
Friday, October 27, 2006
Auditorium, Whitefish Dunes State Park
3275 Clark Lake Rd., Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

State Trails Council Members Present: Ken Carpenter, Tom Huber, Dave Phillips, Martha Schouweiler, Tom Thornton, Randy Harden (via telephone)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present: Peter Biermeier, Brigit Brown, Gary Hanson, Kent Harrison, Arnie Lindauer, Joseph Warren

Others Present: Phil Barker, Chris Culotta, Michelle Grimm, Doug Johnson, Mindy Krolick, Ken Linzmeyer, Dave Peterson, Judy Peterson, George Pinney, Luana Schneider, John Schnorr, Pat Thornton, Angie Tornes

Agenda review/repair and approval of July meeting minutes

- Phillips called the meeting to order. Approval of the July 14, 2006 meeting minutes by Phillips. Huber seconded. Minutes approved.

Chair Report

- Carpenter updated the STC on the legislative council on trails. The legislative council is a special committee formed by the Wisconsin Legislature, chaired by Senator Breske. Members of both houses are on the council. Carpenter explained that the legislative council began as a result of addressing ATV issues in northern Wisconsin but has provided an opportunity for the discussion of many topics, including transportation enhancements and other trail financing issues. The council has provided an opportunity to inform legislators of issues up-front, instead of reacting to the laws they make. Brown stated that one of the positive effects of the council has been the acknowledgement by some legislators for the need of trail assessment and funding for maintenance. Brown will send out the minutes of the legislative council's last meeting to STC members when they are done. The legislative council on trails will only have two more meetings and then report on what they have found. The next meeting is November 10, 2006 in Merrill, Wisconsin. The STC will revisit this issue during the January 2007 meeting.
- Phillips and Harden are on the committee to address the possibility of ATV trails in the Northern Highland – American Legion (NHAL) State Forest. Harden is pleased with the interaction of the committee and user groups. There are two specific areas for ATV trails in the forest that the committee is looking into. Tornes mentioned that some rivers in NHAL have recently been designated National Recreation Waters which may impact the planning by the committee. Brown will have the National Recreation Waters report sent to the NHAL ATV committee leader.
- Phillips complimented Harden on his work at mediating between user groups along the North Country Trail. In past years Phillips had noticed severe ATV damage and

intrusions on the trail. This year during a hike, he noticed that ATV damage appeared to be greatly reduced. Not all the damage is caused by ATVs, there has been some damage caused by horses. Brown mentioned that if user groups are looking for recreation opportunities near the North Country Trail, that they should give their input to county forest plans. County forest plans are required to have a recreation element and anyone interested can contact the county forester to be included in any public comment sessions.

- Phillips summarized the Active Outdoor Recreation Economy Report. The report details the economic impact of silent sports in the United States. There have been many studies on the economic impact of motorized recreation, and this report helps to show the equal importance of non-motorized recreation to the economy.
- Two OHV-related resolutions were passed by the council following the July meeting, a resolution in support of responsible use of motorized recreation vehicles and a resolution in support of a motorized state recreation area. A resolution for support of a Wisconsin State Park System (WSPS) trail crew was also passed by the council.
- Huber and Brown will take officer nominations from council members for STC chair, vice-chair, and secretary before the January 2007 meeting.

Water Trails Presentation

- Angie Tornes, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the National Park Service, introduced what is being done at the national level concerning water trails and passed out a listing of water trail websites. Water trails, both nationally and in Wisconsin, have a rich cultural history, beginning with Native American transportation routes and old fur trade routes. Modern water trails have been the result of much community collaboration. As an example, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail is a 740 mile trail that was a three-year initiative between four states and one Canadian province.
- Trends across the country show that water recreation is becoming a big industry for the economy. Water recreation is also a physical activity that promotes exercise and healthy lifestyles. Tornes passed out a brochure that the state of Pennsylvania has created for water trails. The brochure defines a water trail and offers resources for people to create their own local water trails.
- Tornes stated that silent water recreation is an environmentally sustainable use of the resource. People that live and recreate on the water are inspired to protect the resource to ensure that their waters will be healthy and available for future use.
- Michelle Grimm explained that most of the water trails in Wisconsin are run by non-water groups. The groups get their money locally, through Stewardship grants, or by other sources. The urban water trail in Milwaukee is a very popular route and businesses are very interested in being associated with that trail.
- Water trails can be educational and interpretive as well as be used for recreation and transportation. Grimm stated that the educational and cultural experiences can be different for people on water trails, creating different learning opportunities. The Wolf River provides a natural setting, and would be a much different experience than the water trail that runs through downtown Milwaukee.

- A successful water trail needs secure funding, strong partners, and needs access points that are safe and legal. Phillips stated that Minnesota Department of Transportation funding helped to sign many access points along highways to make them safe. Huber added that providing signage for access points was one of the ways in which the Wisconsin DOT could help in creating water trails.
- With Wisconsin bordering two Great Lakes, sea kayaking routes can also be established as recognized water trails. Minnesota has created a route with access points that travels along the coast from Duluth to the border with Canada. Wisconsin has some popular sea kayaking routes associated with the Apostle Islands, but has the potential for much more.
- Schouweiler commented on Wisconsin's water trail potential and the need to get information to the public. Information for water trails is available, but people need to dig for it. Some water trails, such as the Brule River, have been marked in the past, but have not been maintained. There is a mystique about water trails, and people are attracted to live and recreate on the water. The public is seeking more information on water trails, especially maps and locations of access points. Schouweiler feels the number of users would rapidly increase if Wisconsin had a statewide network of water trails.
- The states surrounding Wisconsin, MN, MI, and IA, have established water trail programs, but Wisconsin, with an abundance of water resources, does not have an established program. The Minnesota DNR has all of their water trails on the DNR website. Iowa has a water trails coordinator and has turned the state into a paddling destination. Iowa gives out a fund every year for groups to work on projects such as portage routes and dam removals. Iowa also gets some money from the motorized gas tax. Huber asked if tubers are considered in the water trails group. Tornes stated that Iowa includes tubers in all of their routes, but separates the tubing routes into "safe" and "unsafe" categories.
- Phillips stated that there had been many efforts to impose a fee on kayaks and canoes in Wisconsin, but those efforts have not been supported by the legislature and particularly by Representative Spencer Black. The State Trails Council would be advised to work with Rep. Black to come up with some kind of funding to help create and maintain a Wisconsin water trails program.
- Tornes asked if tourism dollars could be diverted to the Wisconsin DNR, by having legislation linked to putting money back into rivers. Brown commented that the Wisconsin legislature is refiguring the formula for the motorized boat portion of the gas tax, and that source of funding may need to be looked into when the formula is completed. Biermeier suggested that there needs to be some technical and funding assistance to communities. Tornes mentioned the Rivers Planning Grant as a source of funding.
- Biermeier stated that the Wisconsin Department of Tourism is also asking for information on water trails to package with information such as lodging, points of interest, restaurants, etc. Biermeier sees the potential for the Wisconsin DNR to work with Tourism to promote water trails. Phillips reiterated Schouweiler's comments that a great deal of work on Wisconsin water trails has already been done and that we should resurrect the information and maps used in the past.

- Biermeier stated that there are 72 friends groups in Wisconsin working on Park and Trail projects and he envisions others that would likely be willing to work with water trails. Grimm added that there are at least five very active paddling groups and many other user groups in Wisconsin that would also be willing to help on a volunteer basis. Phillips asked Brown to form a committee to work on promoting water trails, funding, and other issues. Brown and Schouweiler will work to create a list of individuals for a water trails committee.
- Mindy Krolick stated that Door County has some active paddling groups that would be interested in assisting with a water trails initiative and making more information available. Krolick will talk with Brown and Biermeier following the meeting.

DNR Report

- Biermeier thanked Bill Morrissey, who retired as Director of WDNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation in September, for his tenure with the Wisconsin DNR and for the number of important initiatives for Wisconsin's parks that Morrissey began. Biermeier will be Acting Director until November 24. After November 24, there will be subsequent acting directors in approximately six-week intervals until the position is filled permanently.
- The Natural Resources Board endorsed the concept of a Motorized State Recreation Area in July. The DNR is working to create a committee that will put a development plan together. After that point, the committee will work with external partners and user groups, and will examine funding sources and potential motorized recreation area locations.
- The DNR Strategic Plan was also a Morrissey initiative that will continue to move forward. Biermeier hopes a draft of the plan will be available in December. Biermeier will update the council at the January meeting.
- The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is finished. Electronic copies of SCORP are available on the DNR website for free. Hard copies of the report are available for purchase. CDs are also available. Phillips noted a recent example where SCORP was being referenced by both sides of an argument. Those in favor of a condo development along the Wisconsin River, and those opposed to it are both citing SCORP in making their case.
- Biermeier updated the council about the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Amery to Dresser State Trail. The Amery to Dresser Trail is a 14-mile trail that is also a continuation of the Cattail State Trail. The two trails are connected, but they are considered separate trails. The EA for the Amery to Dresser State Trail has been through a very thorough review by the DNR. The issue between non-motorized use and motorized use has been more over ATVs than snowmobiles. Soil samples have been taken and the results are expected soon.

State Trails Report

- Brown has not heard from anyone who is interested in tracking the proceedings of the American Transmission Company (ATC) meetings. The ATC has yet to determine the power line corridor for the Madison to Rockdale route.

- Brown updated the council on the Statewide Environmental Assessment (EA) that will cover all proposed trails in the Network Plan. Brown is drafting the bid and anticipates having it out in January 2007. The EA will only cover non-motorized uses. If a trail wants to allow motorized use, further EA work will need to be completed for that trail.
- Brown reported on the National Trails Symposium. The National Trails Symposium is a four-day event for trail managers, advocates, users and other interested parties to come together and discuss issues. This year the symposium was held in Davenport, IA. Brown also attended the State Trails Administrator meeting where she learned that the Federal Highway Trust Fund, which funds the number one source of trail funding in the United States, the Recreational Trails Program, will be bankrupt by the end of SAFTEA-LU. Trail advocates are looking at ways to make sure trails are a consideration in the future of the programming of the Federal Highway Trust Fund.
- Brown informed the council on recent state trail acquisitions. There has been some difficulty cleaning up and following through on titles. The DNR officially closed on the purchase for the extension to the Hank Aaron State Trail. However the railroad has put a fence in the middle of what the DNR thought it had acquired. Negotiations are ongoing.
- Brown has received approval from the Parks Management Team (PMT) to move forward with the WSPS trail crew. The STC resolution for support of the trail crew helped with that approval. Applications for trail crew visits are expected to be out in January 2007, and Brown hopes to have the trail crew leader position filled by mid-February. The trail crew leader will be responsible for setting up projects for the 2007 summer season. Wyalusing State Park may be the first park to be visited by the trail crew, as Wyalusing has funding and housing available. Phillips asked about having volunteers go out with the trail crew. Brown stated that perhaps the 2008 season would have apprenticeships, with the potential of those individuals starting their own trail crews and duplicating the WSPS trail crew model.

USFS Wheeled Motorized Vehicle Management and Trail Issues

- Barker explained the United States Forest Service (USFS) master plan and the wheeled motorized vehicle rule. The Chequamegon National Forest has developed ATV trails, and the Nicolet National Forest does not currently permit ATV use. With the new master plan, the Nicolet Forest will allow for the construction of ATV trails. The Chequamegon forest will allow for the construction of new ATV trails, while prohibiting ATV use in certain areas of the forest that were previously open to ATVs.
- There is now an ATV spring closure that goes into effect from March 15 to April 30 to protect the forest's trails and roads. This springtime closure includes mountain bike and equestrian use as well. Additionally, all of the roads previously classified for ATV use needed to be designated as open. ATV trails and roads are marked with signs that show the routes are open. If these routes are not signed, the trails and roads are closed. Phillips stated that he had heard that ATV groups have for the most part been in compliance with the changes.
- Barker explained that there are about 26 problem areas that were not formally designated for ATV use and are scheduled to be closed. These "play" areas are not considered a legitimate forest activity. Barker stated that the USFS might be able to work with ATV

recreation areas outside of the national forests to provide connections to the forest's trail system, but "play" areas will not be considered on forest lands.

- The ATV trail system for the Nicolet Forest is still in the planning stage. Harden mentioned that there is not a target date for putting these trails in. Harden is working with Gary Eddy to come up with a coordinator for all of the routes in the forest. ATV routes can change, and the coordinator would help with the inventory of the trails and the planning of new trails and connections.
- Barker explained that off-trail use by wheeled motorized recreation vehicles threaten national forests with the potential to start fires, the destruction of natural habitat, and the spread of invasive species, among other issues. These threats and the impact of unmanaged recreation have been studied at the national level and have been incorporated into the USFS master plan. Barker clarified that the "wheeled motorized vehicle rule" is not solely for ATVs. The rule is designed to be a flexible tool to apply to different forms of recreation. The rule will help the Forest Service to make decisions on new technologies and new vehicles.
- The national forests in Wisconsin are working to create maps of what trails and routes will be open to public use. The USFS looks to have these maps available by January 2009. Luana Schneider, with the Wisconsin 4-Wheel Drive Association, asked about ATV routes that were presently open that might be closed in the future because they are not officially designated or not mapped out. Barker stated that groups and individuals interested in the planning process can give their comments to the forests and can also be put on the forest plan mailing list.

DOT Trail Activities in Northeast Wisconsin

- Huber introduced Chris Culotta, DOT bicycle/pedestrian coordinator for the northeast region of Wisconsin. Culotta has been in his present position for eight years. Culotta explained that the Wisconsin DOT, DNR, and County Boards must have a close relationship, since trails would not happen without the cooperation and collaboration between partners. If there is poor communication, there will most likely be poor trail conditions, trail user conflict, and problems with user access.
- Culotta explained that when the DOT approves various highway projects, there is a great opportunity to incorporate and build bike and pedestrian facilities such as trails, bridges, etc. The DOT is becoming committed to providing bike and pedestrian right-of-way alternatives to road and highway transportation.
- Culotta offered examples of some of the trail projects he has been working on. For one of the projects, Brown County and the DOT wanted to make it possible for visitors to Bay Shore Park to be able to safely walk or bike into and out of the park. The DOT is working to build a bike and pedestrian trail in the park and a way for people to cross Highway 57. The DOT is also working to pave five-foot shoulders for bikers and walkers along County Highway P and Highway 57, as well as paving the shoulders of other roads in the county.
- Huber explained that the DOT is beginning to own more trails. In some instances the DOT will surface their own trails. In other instances, the DOT will provide a right-of-way for a trail, but surfacing of the corridor will be up to the DNR or County. This is one way

to provide more paths and trails for bikers and pedestrians. Brown stated that many bike and pedestrian projects start with a programming person, and thanked Culotta for the great work he has done in the region.

Other Business

- Carpenter stated that the DNR Division of Land, in the Land Legacy Report, identified the area between Madison and Milwaukee as a Glacial Heritage Area. The area is also a hot spot for development as Madison grows to the east and Milwaukee to the west. Carpenter stated that there has been a great deal of interest to connect the existing state lands through a series of trails before the land is lost to development. Carpenter would like to discuss the issue in upcoming STC meetings.
- Carpenter would also like to devote some time in upcoming STC meetings to discuss the Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP). As an advisory council, all STC members should review the criteria for the grant program and should also be informed of the projects that RTP funds. Carpenter also suggested that as the WSPS trail crew progresses, the council could look at doing some hands-on work with the crew, to see the issues related to sustainable trails.
- Biermeier mentioned that the Peshtigo River State Forest master plan is out for review. Concerning equestrian trails, the DNR determined that Governor Thompson State Park was too small and had too many wetland areas to permit horse use, but the Peshtigo River State Forest is a much larger property with 9000 acres.

Meeting Dates for 2007

- Monday, January 22, 2007 10-12 p.m. (teleconference)
Wednesday, April 11, 2007 10-3 p.m. (Madison)
Friday, July 13, 2007, 10-2 p.m. (TBA)
Friday, October 12, 2007, 10-2 p.m. (Bayfield)

Public Comment

- Ken Linzmeyer, with the Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association (WOHVA), inquired about the placement of power lines along trails. Linzmeyer acknowledged that the consensus of the council is to have power lines cross trails as opposed to having trails used as power line corridors. Linzmeyer stated that many OHV riders would be interested in using a utility corridor as a shared use trail to provide additional OHV opportunities in southern Wisconsin. Phillips mentioned that if OHV groups were interested in such a use, to contact the American Transmission Company (ATC) and ask about the secondary use and routing of the corridor. The ATC has not determined the corridor for the Madison to Rockdale route, but if the route went through the Ice Age Reserve, any permitted OHV use on the corridor would be prohibited in the reserve.
- Motion to adjourn by Carpenter. Seconded by Thornton. Meeting adjourned.